CHRIST MYSTICAL

OR THE BLESSED UNION OF CHRIST AND HIS MEMBERS

BY JOSEPH HALL

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CHRIST MYSTICAL

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OR

THE BLESSED UNION OF CHRIST AND HIS MEMBERS

BY

JOSEPH HALL, D.D.

BISHOP OF NORWICH

A.D. 1654

From General Gordon's copy, with an Introduction on the Theology of General Gordon by the Rev. H. Carruthers Wilson, M.A.

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INTRODUCTION

BY

H. CARRUTHERS WILSON, M.A.

THE THEOLOGY OF GENERAL GORDON

No student or expositor of the Bible can fail to be interested in this subject. Few have studied the Bible as General Gordon did, few have applied it so resolutely and with such mighty results to life. It would be unfair to consider his theology without taking his life as a commentary. I feel, therefore, that I must begin with a personal sketch, and I shall have to refer to this as explaining some of the peculiar views he taught and maintained. No one who knew the General would misunderstand the strong statements found in his writings, but the ordinary reader

must often wonder, and perhaps call him mystical and visionary. Many of the criticisms recently made would have been withdrawn, or modified, by a knowledge of how completely he lived the faith he professed.

Towards the end of the summer of 1868 I was appointed to the charge of the Presbyterian Church at Gravesend, and through the good offices of Gordon among others, was recognised as Chaplain to the Presbyterian troops at Gravesend and Milton Barracks, New Tavern Fort, and Tilbury. I remember my first interview as vividly as if it happened yesterday.

When he entered, I was for the moment disappointed. I had heard and read much of "Chinese Gordon," and had formed in my own mind an ideal of the man who had done such wonders. To me that march of the "ever victorious army" is only to be paral-

leled by the march of the "Ten Thousand" Greeks under Cyrus the Younger; and the character of Xenophon is in many respects wonderfully like that of Gordon. But in the very quiet and unassuming man, with a manner that seemed almost nervous, I could trace nothing of my ideal. In a very few minutes, however, I began to know him; and during the three years of our intercourse I grew to appreciate the power of the man. He was hardly above the middle height, with black curly hair, black moustache, and features that, in repose, presented nothing striking. But the eye! dark blue, keen, and piercing; it was the eye of one born to command. I do not wonder that with such a look he commanded willing and perfect obedience. How it changed, too! When speaking of some of his favourite texts, it would be filled with a soft beauty that trans-

figured the face. Then, even more than the eye, was that wonderful smile that sometimes lit up the countenance. It was sweet beyond description, and when accompanied by the merry twinkle of the eye in his times of humour, it was clearly the secret of his power over men. But he could be angry, too, as I well know, with a righteous indignation. I saw him again in church on Sunday, and on the Monday I had the first of many Monday talks over the sermon of the previous day. He was never connected with any section of professing Christians, but he was a regular attendant and an occasional communicant at my church.

I have two books which he gave me, and one of these I especially prize. It is Bishop Hall's *Christ Mystical*, and was Gordon's own copy, marked in many places with pencil on the margin, and in others with the leaves

turned down at particular passages. It bears his signature (which, by the way, is wonderfully little altered in later years) and underneath, the words, "Read prayerfully." Here are two (out of many) passages, and I select them as typical: "It is our faith that must raise our thoughts to a due estimation of our greatness, and must show us how highly we are descended, how royally we are allied, how gloriously estated." "Know that this is a real, true, essential union whereby the person of the believer is indissolubly united to the glorious person of the Son of God. Know that this union is not more mystical than certain, that in natural unions there may be more evidence, there cannot be more truth." Much of Gordon's belief in the indwelling of God, which was the pole-star of his faith and gave him so much happiness and peace, can be

traced (next to the Bible) to this remarkable little book.

The other book is Hill's *Deep Things of God*, which he gave me on the 4th May 1869.

To sum up in a sentence, I never knew a man who lived so near to God. He literally looked not at the seen, but the unseen, and "endured as seeing Him who is invisible."

It will easily be seen that such a man would never have a theology exact and homogeneous in all its details. He took a few great truths of Scripture and made them part of his very being.

These truths were :—

I. The Indwelling of God. Long before I knew him, he had adopted this great doctrine as the central truth of religion, and testified to the abiding peace it brought to his soul. "It would have been a great bless-

ing to me if some one had told me early in my wilderness journey to seek the realisation of the Holy Ghost's presence in me, and leave the rest." This was his favourite topic, and I think it possessed him. I have heard him say to one of the big boys in his class, "You know you have God dwelling in you." From any one but Gordon such a statement would have sounded strange, and indeed I have heard some at Gravesend question his teaching. It will be noticed how constantly this truth comes out in his *Reflections in Palestine.* "However we may explain away the term, St. John (vi. 56) states this indwelling in those who eat His flesh and drink His blood, and (vi. 53) states as clearly that except we do so, there is no life in us. Therefore it would seem clear that this eating implies Christ's indwelling."[1] Those acquainted

[1] *Reflections in Palestine*, p. 51.

with Gordon's thoughts would quite understand the allusions to the "eating" in his letters from Khartoum to Prebendary Barnes, but without such knowledge the statements seem strange, if not mystical. It is the key to his theology, and without the key one cannot wonder that so many critics have called him visionary and unpractical. Judged by the results in the ragged school lads at Gravesend, it was a most practical theology, though no doubt the personal influence of the man was quite as powerful as his teaching.

II. Faith, the result of the Indwelling of God. Gordon held that we receive the Holy Spirit as the gift of God, and that He awakes in us the faith that works out our salvation. "There can be no faith where the Holy Ghost is not indwelling." "Faith is the direct effect of the indwelling of the

Holy Ghost." On this point Gordon was very decided. He had no patience with the ordinary arguments for the conversion of unbelievers, and it certainly was startling to hear him say, "No argument is wanting; just realise that God's Spirit is in you." I can testify to the marvellous effect of such teaching on many in Gravesend. He would say to any one who came to him with doubt or difficulty, "Do you know that the Holy Ghost is living in you? Realise that, and all the rest will follow as a sequence." "The nourishing of this truth in daily life is all that is needed" (he would add), "and God feeds us by His holy Scriptures." It will be seen that he rests absolutely on that grand doctrine (as he called it) of the Indwelling of God. In his case it gave joy and peace.

III. An absolute trust in Providence.

"Everything," he would say, "is from God, and of God." He held that *all* things are ordained to happen, and must happen. For himself he was only an instrument in God's hand, and his life absolutely at the disposal of his Creator. Hence his courage. Why should he fear? Death could only bring him closer to his God. With many men such a faith would have led to fatalism, but Gordon was no slothful fatalist. He was one of the most indefatigable workers I ever knew. Up early every morning, his first hour was given to prayer and reading. No one dare disturb him there. At nine he began his work at the Forts, and often was in Thames mud till two o'clock. The afternoon and evening were devoted to visiting the infirmary, workhouse, or the sick and infirm. Society as such he avoided. He was wonderfully cheerful and bright. "I

believe in our active employment in future life, and like the thought."

IV. Union with Christ. This was his constant theme. "Union with Christ by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost is the Alpha and Omega of all life, and this view commends itself to our reason. The outcome of this union is a fruit, and if we seek and nourish the union, the fruits of the Holy Ghost cannot but follow as sequences." His three favourite books were, A Kempis' *Imitation of Christ*, Hill's *Deep Things of God*, and Hall's *Christ Mystical*. From the first such a passage as "Where is true peace and glory? Is it not in Me?" was a favourite quotation of the General's. Hill's *Deep Things* he often mentioned to me as a book to be read and studied constantly. The opening sentence of the book he often used: "How long might one live with some

persons who are looked upon as very good Christians, and not know whether they had any souls or not!" No one could be with Gordon for an hour without knowing of the Master he served and the zeal of the servant.

Though Gordon himself thought his belief in the Indwelling of God the most important factor in his creed, I am inclined to think that his view of the Union of Christ and believers had most influence in moulding his character and conduct. In the little copy of Hall's *Christ Mystical*, which he gave me, marked by himself in every chapter, one can see the favourite topics selected. There was undoubtedly a vein of mysticism in the man, and such passages as these he marks with approval. "O Saviour, Thou art more mine than my body is mine. My sense feels that present, but so that I must lose it;

my faith sees and feels Thee so present with me, that I shall never be parted from Thee." "Our bodily feet move in our secular ways; our spiritual walk with God in all the ways of His commandments." It is interesting to see how this doctrine grew with his years. In 1868 he held it firmly; in 1883 it pervades every thought, and is to be noticed in almost every page of his *Reflections*. "We are members of Christ's body mystical, existent ere the worlds were made, yet fashioned in time." "To me the fact that my soul is so united to my body that I know not which is my body and which my soul, is a proof of the oneness of Christ with our souls, neither step being visible as a definite step, while each is a step."

But I feel as I write these things how feebly cold words convey an idea of the man. I look back on the little intercourse

I had with him as very fruitful to my own spiritual life. I hope that the marvellous interest awakened in him during the last year may help many to a higher life of faith and duty. Such men neither live in vain nor die prematurely. They rest from their labours, but their example lives to animate others from generation to generation, and from age to age.

H. CARRUTHERS WILSON.

INTRODUCTORY

CHAPTER I

SECTION I

How to be happy in the apprehending of Christ

THERE is not so much need of learning as of grace to apprehend those things which concern our everlasting peace. Neither is it our brain that must be set on work here, but our heart; for true happiness doth not consist in a mere speculation, but a fruition of good. However, therefore, there is excellent use of scholarship in all the sacred employments of Divinity; yet in the main act, which imports salvation, skill must give place to affection. Happy is the soul that is possessed

of Christ, how poor soever in all inferior endowments.

Ye are wide, O ye great wits, while you spend yourselves in curious questions and learned extravagances. Ye shall find one touch of Christ more worth to your souls than all your deep and laboursome disquisitions: one dram of faith more precious than a pound of knowledge. In vain shall ye seek for this in your books, if you miss it in your bosoms. If you know all things, and cannot truly say, *I know whom I have believed* (2 Tim. i. 12), you have but knowledge enough to know yourselves truly miserable.

Wouldst thou, therefore, my son, find true and solid comfort in the hour of temptation, in the agony of death? make sure work for thy soul in the days of thy peace. Find Christ thine; and, in the despite of hell, thou art both safe and blessed.

Look not so much to an absolute Deity, infinitely and incomprehensibly glorious: alas, that Majesty, because perfectly and essentially good, is, out of Christ, no other than an enemy to thee. Thy sin hath offended His justice, which is Himself: what hast thou to do with that dreadful power which thou hast provoked?

Look to that merciful and all-sufficient *Mediator betwixt God and man*, who is both God and man, *Jesus Christ the righteous* (1 Tim. ii. 5; 1 John ii. 1). It is His charge and our duty—*Ye believe in God, believe also in me* (John xiv. 1).

Yet look not merely to the Lord Jesus, as considered in the notion of His own eternal being, as the Son of God, co-equal and co-essential to God the Father; but look upon Him as He stands in reference to the sons of men. And herein also look not to Him so

much as a Lawgiver and a Judge—there is terror in such apprehension,—but look upon Him as a gracious Saviour and Advocate.[1] And, lastly, look not upon Him as in the generality of His mercy the common Saviour of mankind: what comfort were it to thee that all the world except thyself were saved? but look upon Him as the dear Redeemer of thy soul; as thine Advocate at the right hand of Majesty; as One with whom thou art, through His wonderful mercy, inseparably united.

Thus look upon Him, firmly and fixedly, so as He may never be out of thine eyes; and whatever secular objects interpose themselves betwixt thee and Him, look through them as some slight mists, and terminate thy sight still in this blessed prospect. Let neither earth nor heaven hide them from thee in whatsoever condition.

[1] Luther, in *Galatians*.

SECTION II

The honour and happiness of being united to Christ

AND while thou art thus taken up see if thou canst, without wonder and a kind of ecstatical amazement, behold the infinite goodness of thy God, that hath exalted thy wretchedness to no less than a blessed and indivisible union with the Lord of Glory; so as thou, who in the sense of thy miserable mortality mayst say *to corruption, Thou art my father; and to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister* (Job xvii. 14), canst now, through the privilege of thy faith, hear the Son of God say unto thee, *Thou art bone of my bone,*

and flesh of my flesh (Gen. ii. 23; Eph. v. 30).

Surely, as we are too much subject to pride ourselves in these earthly glories, so we are too apt, through ignorance or pusillanimity, to undervalue ourselves in respect of our spiritual condition: we are far more noble and excellent than we account ourselves.

It is our faith that must raise our thoughts to a due estimation of our greatness, and must show us how highly we are descended, how royally we are allied, how gloriously estated. That only is it that must advance us to heaven, and bring heaven down to us: through the want of the exercise whereof it comes to pass that, to the great prejudice of our souls, we are ready to think of Christ Jesus as a stranger to us; as one, aloof off in another world, apprehended only by fits in a kind of ineffectual speculation, without any

lively feeling of our own interest in Him; whereas, we ought, by the powerful operation of this grace in our hearts, to find so heavenly an appropriation of Christ to our souls as that every believer may truly say, "I am one with Christ: Christ is one with me."

Had we not good warrant for so high a challenge it could be no less than a blasphemous arrogance to lay claim to the royal blood of heaven; but since it hath pleased the God of Heaven so far to dignify our unworthiness as, in the multitude of His mercies, to admit and allow us to be *partakers of the divine nature* (2 Peter i. 4), it were no other than an unthankful stupidity not to lay hold on so glorious a privilege, and to go for less than God hath made us.

THE KIND AND MANNER OF THIS UNION WITH CHRIST

CHAPTER II

KNOW now, my son, that thou art upon the ground of all consolation to thy soul, which consists in this beatifical union with thy God and Saviour.

Think not, therefore, to pass over this important mystery with some transient and perfunctory glances; but let thy heart dwell upon it, as that which must stick by thee in all extremities, and cheer thee up when thou art forsaken of all worldly comforts.

Do not, then, conceive of this union as some imaginary thing that hath no other being but in the brain; whose faculties have power to apprehend and bring home to itself

far remote substances ; possessing itself, in a sort, of whatsoever it conceives. Do not think it a union merely virtual, by the participation of those spiritual gifts and graces which God worketh in the soul, as the comfortable effects of our happy conjunction with Christ. Do not think it an accidental union, in respect of some circumstances and qualities, wherein we communicate with Him who is God and Man ; nor yet a metaphorical union, by way of figurative resemblance.

But know that this is a true, real, essential, substantial union whereby the person of the believer is indissolubly united to the glorious person of the Son of God. Know that this union is not more mystical than certain ; that in natural unions there may be more evidence, there cannot be more truth. Neither is there so firm and close a union

betwixt the soul and body as there is betwixt Christ and the believing soul; forasmuch as that may be severed by death, but this never.

Away yet with all gross carnality of conceit. This union is true and really existent, but yet spiritual. And if some of the ancients have termed it natural and bodily, it hath been in respect to the subject united: our Humanity to the two blessed natures of the Son of God, met in one most glorious person; not in respect of the manner of the uniting.

Neither is it the less real because spiritual. Spiritual agents neither have nor put forth any whit less virtue, because sense cannot discern their manner of working. Even the loadstone, though an earthern substance, yet when it is out of sight, whether under the table, or behind a solid partition,

stirreth the needle as effectually as if it were within view; shall not he contradict his senses that will say, "It cannot work, because I see it not"?

O Saviour, Thou art more mine than my body is mine. My sense feels that present, but so that I must lose it; my faith sees and feels Thee so present with me, that I shall never be parted from Thee.

THE RESEMBLANCES OF THIS

UNION

CHAPTER III

SECTION I

The resemblance of this union by the head and body

THERE is no resemblance whereby the Spirit of God more delights to set forth the heavenly union betwixt Christ and the believer than that of THE HEAD AND THE BODY.

The head gives sense and motion to all the members of the body; and the body is one, not only by the continuity of all the parts held together with the same natural ligaments, and covered with one and the same skin; but much more by the animation of the same soul quickening that whole frame.

In the acting whereof it is not the large extent of the stature and distance of the limbs from each other that can make any difference. The body of a child that is but a span long cannot be said to be more united than the vast body of a giantly son of Anak, whose height is as the cedars; and if we could suppose such a body as high as heaven itself, that one soul which dwells in it, and is diffused through all the parts of it, would make it but one entire body.

Right so it is with Christ and His church. That one Spirit of His, which dwells in and enlivens every believer, unites all those far distant members, both to each other and to their head; and makes them up into one true mystical body, so as now every true believer may, without presumption, but with all holy reverence and humble thankfulness, say to his God and Saviour, "Behold, Lord,

I am, how unworthy soever, one of the limbs of Thy body; and therefore have a right to all that Thou hast, to all that Thou doest: Thine eyes see for me; Thy hand acts for me; Thy life, Thy grace, Thy happiness is mine."

Oh, the wonder of the two blessed unions! In the personal union it pleased God to assume and unite our human nature to the Deity; in the spiritual and mystical, it pleases God to unite the person of every believer to the person of the Son of God. Our souls are too narrow to bless God enough for these incomprehensible mercies: mercies wherein He hath preferred us, be it spoken with all Godly lowliness, to the blessed angels of heaven: *For verily he took not upon him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham* (Heb. ii. 16). Neither hath He made those glorious spirits members of His mystical body, but His saints, whom He

hath, as it were, so incorporated, that they are become His body and He theirs, according to that of the divine apostles, *For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ* (1 Cor. xii. 12).

SECTION II

This union set forth by the resemblance of the husband and wife

NEXT hereunto there is no resemblance of this mystery either more frequent or more full of lively expression than that of THE CONJUGAL UNION BETWIXT THE HUSBAND AND WIFE.

Christ is, as the Head, so the Husband of the Church; the Church and every believing soul is the spouse of this Heavenly Bridegroom, whom He marrieth unto Himself *for ever, in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies* (Isa. lxii. 5; Hos. ii. 19).

And this match, thus made up, fulfils that decretive word of the Almighty, *They twain shall be one flesh* (Eph. v. 31 ; Gen. ii. 24).

Oh, happy conjunction of the second Adam with her which was taken out of his most precious side ! Oh, heavenly and complete marriage ! wherein God the Father brings and gives the bride (Gen. ii. 22). *All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me*, saith Christ (John vi. 37) ; wherein God the Son receives the bride as mutually partaking of the same nature, and can say, *This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh* (John i. 14 ; Gen. ii. 23) ; wherein God the Holy Ghost knits our wills in a full and glad consent to the full consummation of this blessed wedlock.

And those whom God hath thus joined together, let no man (no devil can) put asunder.

What is there, then, which an affectionate husband can withhold from a dear wife? He that hath given himself to her, what can he deny to impart? He that hath made himself one with her, how can he be divided from his other self? Some wild fancies there are that have framed the links of marriage of so brittle stuff as that they may be snapt in sunder upon every slight occasion; but He that ordained it in Paradise for an earthly representation of this heavenly union betwixt Christ and His Church, hath made that and His own indissoluble.

Here is no contract in the future which, upon some intervenient accidents, may be re-united, but *I am my well-beloved's, and my well-beloved is mine* (Cant. vi. 3; ii. 16); and, therefore, each is so other's that neither of them is their own.

Oh, the comfortable mystery of our unit-

ing to the Son of God! *The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband* (1 Cor. vii. 4). We are at Thy disposing, O Saviour: we are not our own. Neither art Thou so absolutely Thine as that we may not, through Thine infinite mercy, claim an interest in Thee. Thou hast given us such a right in Thyself as that we are bold to lay challenge to all that is Thine; to Thy love, to Thy merits, to Thy blessings, to Thy glory. It was wont of old to be the plea of the Roman wives to their husbands, "Where thou art Caius, I am Caia"; and now, in our present marriages, we have not stuck to say, "With all my worldly goods I thee endow." And if it be thus in our imperfect conjunctions here upon earth, how much more in that exquisite Oneness which is betwixt Thee, O blessed Saviour, and Thy dearest spouse, the Church!

What is it, then, that can hinder us from a sweet and heavenly fruition of Thee?

Is it the loathsome condition of our nature? Thou sawest this before, and yet couldst say, *when we were yet in our blood, Live* (Ezek. xvi. 6). Had we not been so vile Thy mercy had not been so glorious. Thy free grace did all for us: *Thou washedst us with water, and anointedst us with oil, and clothedst us with broidered work, and girdedst us about with fine linen, and coveredst us with silk, and deckedst us with ornaments; and didst put bracelets upon our hands, and a chain on our neck, and jewels on our foreheads, and earrings on our ears, a beautiful crown on our heads* (Ezek. xvi. 9-12). What we had not, Thou gavest; what Thou didst not find, Thou madest, that we might be a not unmeet match for the Lord of Life.

Is it want of beauty? *Behold, I am*

black, but comely (Cant. i. 5). Whatever our hue be in our own or others' eyes, it is enough that we are lovely in Thine. *Behold, thou art fair, my beloved; behold, thou art fair, yea, pleasant* (Cant. i. 16). *Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem* (vi. 4). *How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!* (vii. 6). But, O Saviour, if Thou take contentment in this poor unperfect beauty of Thy spouse, the Church, how infinite pleasure should Thy spouse take in that absolute perfection that is in Thee, who art all loveliness and glory! and if she hath ravished Thy heart with one of her eyes (Cant. v. 16; iv. 9), how much more reason hath her heart to be wholly ravished with both Thine, which are so full of grace and amiableness! and in this mutual fruition what can there be other than perfect blessedness?

SECTION III

The resemblance of this union by the Nourishment and the Body

THE Spirit of God, well knowing how much it imports us both to know and feel this blessed union, whereof Himself is the only worker, labours to set it forth to us by the representations of many of our familiar concernments, which we daily find in our meats and drinks, in our houses, in our gardens and orchards.

That which is nearest to us is our *nourishment.* What can be more evident than that the bread, the meat, the drink that we receive is incorporated into us, and

becomes part of the substance whereof we consist? So as, after perfect digestion, there can be no distinction betwixt what we are and what we took. While that bread was in the bin, and that meat in the shambles, and that drink in the vessel, it had no relation to us, nor we to it: yea, while all these were on the table, yea, in our mouths, yea, newly let down into our stomachs, they are not fully ours; for, upon some nauseating dislike of nature, they may yet go the same way they came. But if the concoction be once fully finished, now they are so turned into our blood and flesh that they can be no more distinguished from our former substance than that could be divided from itself; now they are dispersed into the veins, and concorporated to the flesh; and no part of our flesh and blood is more ours than that which was lately the

blood of the grapes, and the flesh of this fowl or that beast.

O Saviour, Thou who art Truth itself hast said, *I am the living bread that came down from heaven* (John vi. 51). *My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed* (vi. 55); and thereupon hast most justly inferred, *He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him* (vi. 56); and, as a necessary consequent of this spiritual manducation, *Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life* (vi. 54).

Lo, Thou art bread indeed: not the common bread, but manna; not the Israelitish manna; alas, that fell from no higher than the region of clouds, and they that eat it died with it in their mouths; but Thou art the Living Bread that came down from the heaven of heavens, of whom whosoever

eats lives for ever. Thy flesh is meat, not for our stomachs, but for our souls; our faith receives and digests Thee, and makes Thee ours, and us Thine.

Our material food, in these corruptible bodies, runs into corruption; Thy spiritual food nourisheth purely, and strengthens us to a blessed immortality.

As for this material food, many a one longs for it that cannot get it; many a one hath it that cannot eat it; many eat it that cannot digest it; many digest it into noxious and corrupt humours; all that receive it do but maintain a perishing life, if not a languishing death. But this flesh of Thine, as it was never withheld from any true appetite, so it never yields but wholesome and comfortable sustenance to the soul; never hath any other issue than an everlasting life and happiness.

O Saviour, whensoever I sit at mine own

table, let me think of Thine; whensoever I feed on the bread and meat that is set before me, and feel myself nourished by that repast, let me mind that better sustenance which my soul receives from Thee; and find Thee more one with me than that bodily food.

SECTION IV

This union resembled by the Branch and the Stock

LOOK but into thy garden or orchard, and see the vine, or any other fruit-bearing tree, how it grows and fructifies. The *branches* are loaden with increase: whence is this but that they are one with the stock, and the stock one with the root? Were either of these severed, the plant were barren and dead. The branch hath not sap enough to maintain life in itself, unless it receive it from the body of the tree; nor that, unless it derived it from the root; nor that, unless it were cherished by the earth.

Lo, I am the vine, saith our Saviour, *ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered* (John xv. 5, 6). Were the branch and the body of the tree of different substances, and only closed together in some artificial contiguity, no fruit could be expected from it; it is only the abiding in the tree as a living limb of that plant which yields it the benefit and issue of vegetation. No otherwise is it betwixt Christ and His Church; the bough and the tree are not more of one piece than we are of one substance with our Saviour; and, branching out from Him, and receiving the sap of heavenly virtue from His precious root, we cannot but be acceptably fruitful.

But if the analogy seem not to be so full—for that the branch issues naturally from the

tree, and the fruit from the branch, whereas we by nature have no part in the Son of God—take that clearer resemblance which the Apostle fetches from the stock and the graff or scion. The branches of the wild olive (Rom. xi.) are cut off, and are graffed with choice scions of the good olive. Those imps grow, and are now, by this incision, no less embodied in that stock than if they had sprouted out by a natural propagation; neither can be any more separated from it than the strongest bough that nature puts forth. In the meantime that scion alters the nature of that stock, and while the root gives fatness to the stock, and the stock yields juice to the scion, the scion gives goodness to the plant, and a specification to the fruit: so as, while the imp is now the same thing with the stock, the tree is different from what it was.

So it is betwixt Christ and the believing soul. Old Adam is our wild stock: what could that have yielded but either none or sour fruit? We are imped with the new man, Christ, that is now incorporated into us. We are become one with Him. Our nature is not more ours than He is ours by grace. Now we bear His fruit, and not our own; our old stock is forgotten; all things are become new. Our natural life we receive from Adam; our spiritual life and growth from Christ, from whom, after the improvement of this blessed incision, we can be no more severed than He can be severed from Himself.

SECTION V

The resemblance of this union by the Foundation and the Building

LOOK but upon thy house (that from vegetative creatures thou mayest turn thine eyes to those things which have no life); if that be uniform, the *foundation* is not of a different matter from the *walls*; but those are but one piece; the superstructure is so raised upon the foundation as if all were but one stone.

Behold, Christ is the *chief corner stone*, *elect* and *precious* (1 Peter ii. 6); neither can there be *any other foundation laid than that which is laid* on Him (1 Cor. iii. 11). We

are *lively stones, built up to a spiritual house*, on that sure and firm foundation (1 Peter ii. 5).

Some loose stones, perhaps, that lie unmortared upon the battlements may be easily shaken down; but who ever saw a squared marble, laid by line and level, in a strong wall, upon a well-grounded base, fly out of his place by whatsoever violence, since both the strength of the foundation below and the weight of the fabric above have settled it in a posture utterly unmovable? Such is our spiritual condition. O Saviour, Thou art our foundation; we are laid upon Thee, and are therein one with Thee. We can no more be disjoined from Thy foundation than the stones of Thy foundation can be disunited from themselves.

So then, to sum up all, as the head and members are but one body, as the husband

and wife are but one flesh, as our meat and drink become part of ourselves, as the tree and branches are but one plant, as the foundation and walls are but one fabric, so Christ and the believing soul are indivisibly one with each other.

THE CERTAINTY AND INDISSOLUBLENESS OF THIS UNION

CHAPTER IV

WHERE are those, then, that go about to divide Christ from Himself? Christ real from Christ mystical; yielding Christ one with Himself, but not one with His Church; making the true believer no less separable from his Saviour than from the entireness of his own obedience; dreaming of the uncomfortable and self-contradicting paradoxes of the total and final apostasy of saints.

Certainly these men have never thoroughly digested the meditation of the blessed union whereof we treat.

Can they hold the believing soul a limb of that body whereof Christ is the head, and

yet imagine a possibility of dissolution? Can they affain to the Son of God a body that is imperfect? Can they think that body perfect that hath lost his limbs? Even in this mystical body the best joints may be subject to strains, yea, perhaps to some painful and perilous luxation; but as it was in the natural body of Christ, when it was in death most exposed to the cruelty of all enemies, that upon an over-ruling providence not a bone of it could be broken, so it is still and ever with the spiritual; some scourgings and blows it may suffer, yea, perhaps some bruises and gashes, but no bone can be shattered in pieces, much less dissevered from the rest of the body; were we left to ourselves, or could we be so much as in conceit sundered from the body whereof we are, alas, we are but as other men, subject to the same sinful infirmities, to the same dangerous

and deadly miscarriages; but since it hath pleased the God of Heaven to unite us to Himself, now it concerns Him to maintain the honour of His own body by preserving us entire.

Can they acknowledge the faithful soul married in truth and righteousness to that celestial husband, and made up into one flesh with the Lord of Glory? and can they think of any bills of divorce written in heaven? Can they suppose that which by way of type was done in the earthly paradise to be really undone in the heavenly? What an Infinite Power hath put together, can they imagine that a limited power can disjoin? Can they think sin can be of more prevalence than mercy? Can they think the unchangeable God subject to after-thoughts? Even the Jewish repudiations never found favour in heaven; they were permitted as a lesser evil

to avoid a greater—never allowed as good; neither had so much as that toleration ever been, if the hard-heartedness and cruelty of that people had not enforced it upon Moses in a prevention of further mischief; what place can this find with a God in whom there is an infinite tenderness of love and mercy? No time can be any check to His gracious choice; the inconstant minds of us men may alter upon slight dislikes; our God is ever Himself, *Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever* (Heb. xiii. 8); *with* Him *there is no variableness nor shadow of turning* (James i. 17). Divorces were ever grounded upon hatred (Mal. ii. 16). *No man*, saith the Apostle, *ever yet hated his own flesh* (Eph. v. 29); much less shall God do so, who is love itself (1 John iv. 16). His love and our union is, like Himself, everlasting. *Having loved his own*, saith the Disciple of Love,

which were in the world, he loveth them to the end (John xiii. 1). He that hates putting away (Mal. ii. 16) can never act it; so as in this relation we are indissoluble.

Can they have received that *bread which came down from heaven*, and *flesh* which *is meat indeed*, and that *blood* which *is drink indeed*? can their souls have digested it by a lively faith, and converted themselves into it, and it into themselves, and can they now think it can be severed from their own substance?

Can they find themselves truly ingraffed in the tree of life, and grown into one body with that heavenly plant, and as a living branch of that tree, bearing pleasant and wholesome fruit, acceptable to God (Rev. xxii. 2) and beneficial to men? and can they look upon themselves as some withered bough, fit only for the fire?

Can they lay themselves living stones surely laid upon the foundation, Jesus Christ, to the making up of a heavenly temple for the eternal habitation of God? and can they think they can be shaken out with every storm of temptation?

Have these men ever taken into their serious thought that divine prayer and meditation which our blessed Redeemer now at the point of His death left for a happy farewell to His Church, in every word whereof there is a heaven of comfort, *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe in me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one with us. And the glory that thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me* (John xvii. 20-22). O heavenly consolation! O indefeasible

assurance! what room can there be now here for our diffidence? Can the Son of God pray and not be heard? For Himself He needs not pray, as being eternally one with the Father, *God blessed for ever*; He prays for His, and His prayer is, That they may be one with the Father and Him, even as they are one. They cannot therefore but be partakers of this blessed union; and being partakers of it, they cannot be dissevered; and to make sure work, that glory which the Father gave to the Son of His Love, they are already, through His gracious participation, prepossessed of; here they have begun to enter upon that heaven from which none of the powers of hell can possibly eject them. O the unspeakably happy condition of believers! O that all the saints of God, in a comfortable sense of their inchoate blessedness, could sing for joy, and here beforehand

begin to take up those hallelujahs which they shall ere long continue (and never end) in the Choir of the Highest Heaven !

THE PRIVILEGES AND BENEFITS

OF THIS UNION

CHAPTER V

HAVING now taken a view of this blessed union, in the nature and resemblances of it, it will be time to bend thine eyes upon those most advantageous consequents and high privileges which do necessarily follow upon and attend this heavenly conjunction.

SECTION I

The first of these benefits—Life, wherein: (1) *A complaint of our insensibleness of this mercy, and an excitation to a cheerful recognition of it;* (2) *An incitement to joy and thankfulness for Christ our Life;* (3) *The duties we owe to God for His mercy to us in this life, which we have from Christ;* (4) *The improvement of this life, in that Christ is made* (1) *Our Wisdom;* (2) *Our Righteousness;* (3) *Our Sanctification;* (4) *Our Redemption.*

WHEREOF the first is that which we are wont to account sweetest—Life.

Not this natural life, which is maintained by the breath of our nostrils. Alas, what is that but a bubble, a vapour, a shadow, a dream, nothing? as it is the gift of a good

God, worthy to be esteemed precious; but as it is considered in its own transitoriness and appendent miseries, and in comparison of a better life, not worthy to take up our hearts.

This life of nature is that which ariseth from the union of the body with the soul, many times enjoyed upon hard terms; the spiritual life which we now speak of arising from the union betwixt God and the soul is that wherein there can be nothing but perfect contentment, and joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Yea, this is that life which Christ not only gives, but is: He that gave Himself for us, and is that life that He gives us; *When Christ, which is our life, shall appear*, saith the Apostle (Col. iii. 4); and *Christ is to me to live* (Phil. i. 21); and most emphatically, *I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live;*

yet not I, but Christ liveth in me (Gal. ii. 20). Lo, it is a common favour that in Him we live, but it is an especial favour to His own that He lives in us: *Know you not your own selves*, saith the Apostle, *how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?* (2 Cor. xiii. 5); and wheresoever He is, there He lives; we have not a dead Saviour, but a living; and where He lives He animates. It is not, therefore, St. Paul's case alone; it is every believer's, who may truly say, *I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me*: now, how these lives and the authors of them are distinguished is worth thy carefullest consideration.

Know then, my son, that every faithful man's bosom is a Rebecca's womb (Gen. xxv. 22) wherein there are twins: a rough Esau and the seed of promise; the old man and the new; the flesh and the spirit; and

these have their lives distinct from each other; the new man lives not the life of the old, neither can the old man live the life of the new; it is not one life that could maintain the opposite strugglings of both these. Corrupt nature is it that gives and continues the life of the old man; it is Christ that gives life to the new.

We cannot say but the old man, or flesh, is the man too: *For I know*, saith the chosen vessel, *that in me* (*that is, in my flesh*) *dwelleth no good thing* (Rom. vii. 18); but the spiritual part may yet better challenge the title. *For I delight in the law of God after the inward man* (verse 22).

That old man of ours is derived from the first Adam; as we sinned in him, so he liveth in us; the second Adam both gives and is the life of our regeneration, like as He is also the life of our glory, the life that

follows our second resurrection: *I am*, saith He, *the resurrection and the life.*

What is it, then, whereby the new creature lives? surely no other than the Spirit of Christ; that alone is it that gives being and life to the renewed soul. Life is no stranger to us; there is nothing wherewith we are so well acquainted; yea, we feel continually what it is and what it produceth; it is that from whence all sense, action, motion floweth; it is that which gives us to be what we are.

All this is Christ to the regenerate man; it is one thing what he is or doth as a man; another thing what he is or doth as a Christian. As a man he hath eyes, ears, motions, affections, understanding naturally as his own; as a Christian he hath all these from Him with whom he is spiritually one, the Lord Jesus.

And the objects of all these vary accordingly. His natural eyes behold bodily and material things, his spiritual eyes see things invisible. His outward ears hear the sound of the voice, his inward ears hear the voice of God's Spirit speaking to his soul. His bodily feet move in his own secular ways, his spiritual walk with God in all the ways of His commandments. His natural affections are set upon those things which are agreeable thereunto; he loves beauty, fears pain and loss, rejoices in outward prosperity, hates an enemy; his renewed affections are otherwise and more happily bestowed; now he loves goodness for its own sake, hates nothing but sin, fears only the displeasure of a good God, rejoices in God's favour, which is better than life. His former thoughts were altogether taken up with vanity and earthed in the world; now he

seeks the things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God (Col. iii. 1).

Finally, he is such as that a beholder sees nothing but man in him; but God and his soul find Christ in him, both in his renewed person and actions, in all the degrees, both of his life and growth, of his sufferings and glory: *My little children*, saith St. Paul, *of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you* (Gal. iv. 19).

Lo, here Christ both conceived and born in the faithful heart! Formation follows conception, and travail implies a birth. Now the believer is a *newborn babe* in Christ (1 Cor. iii. 1; 1 Peter ii. 2); and so, mutually, Christ in him. From thence he grows up to strength of *youth* (1 John ii. 14), and at last to *perfection*, even towards *the measure of the stature of the fulness of*

Christ (Eph. iv. 13; 2 Cor. xiii. 9; Heb. vi. 1). And in this condition he is *dead with Christ* (Rom. vi. 8); he is *buried with Christ* (verse 4); he is *alive again unto God through Christ* (verse 11); he is *risen with Christ* (Col. iii. 1), and *with Christ* he is *glorified* (Rom. viii. 17); yea, yet more than so, His sufferings are his (Col. i. 24); he is *in Christ an heir of glory* (Rom. viii. 17), and *Christ* is *in* him, *the hope of glory* (Col. i. 27).

(1) Dost thou not now find cause, my son, *to complain of thyself*, as, I confess, I daily do: *that thou art so miserably apt to forget these intimate respects between thy Christ and thee?* Art thou not ashamed to think how little sense thou hast had of thy great happiness?

Lo, Christ is in thy bosom, and thou feelest Him not! It is not thy soul that

animates thee in thy renewed estate; it is thy God and Saviour, and thou hast not hitherto perceived it.

It is no otherwise with thee in this case than with the members of thine own body. There is the same life in thy fingers and toes that there is in the head or heart, yea, in the whole man; and yet those limbs know not that they have such a life. Had those members reason as well as sense they would perceive that wherewith they are enlivened; thou hast more than reason—faith, and therefore mayest well know whence thou hast this spiritual life; and thereupon art much wanting to thyself if thou dost not enjoy so useful and comfortable an apprehension.

Resolve, therefore, with thyself that no secular occasion shall ever set off thy heart from this blessed object, and that thou

wilt as soon forget thy natural life as this spiritual, and raise up thy thoughts from this dust to the heaven of heavens. Shake off this natural pusillanimity and mean conceit of thyself as if thou wert all earth, and know thyself advanced to a celestial condition; that thou art united to the Son of God, and animated by the Holy Spirit of God, so as *the life which* thou now *livest in the flesh*, thou *livest by the faith of the Son of God, who loved* thee, *and give himself for* thee (Gal. ii. 20).

See, then, and confess how just cause we have *to condemn the dead-heartedness wherewith we are subject to be possessed*; and how many worthy Christians are there in the world who bear a part with us in this just blame? who have yielded over themselves to a disconsolate heartlessness and a sad dejection of spirit, partly through a natural disposition

inclining to dumpishness, and partly through the prevalence of temptation ; for Satan, well knowing how much it makes for our happiness cheerfully to reflect upon our interest in Christ, and to live in the joyful sense of it, labours by all means to withdraw our hearts from this so comfortable object, and to clog us with a pensive kind of spiritual sullenness, accounting it no small mastery if he can prevail with us so far as to bereave us of this habitual joy in the Holy Ghost, arising from the inanimation of Christ, living and breathing within us.

So much the more, therefore, must we bend all the powers of our souls against this dangerous and deadly machination of our spiritual enemy ; labour as for life to maintain this fort of our joy against all the powers of darkness ; and if at any time we find ourselves beaten off through the violence

of temptation, we must chide ourselves into our renewed valour, and expostulate the matter with our shrinking courage with the man after God's own heart, *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God* (Ps. xlii. 11; xliii. 5).

(2) Neither is here more place for a heavenly joy than for *height of spirit and raptures of admiration* at that infinite goodness and mercy of our God, who hath vouchsafed so far to grace His elect as to honour them with a special inhabitation of His Ever-Blessed Deity, yea, to live in them, and to make them live mutually in and to Himself.

What capacity is there in the narrow heart of man to conceive of this incompre-

hensible favour to His poor creature? O Saviour, this is no small part of that great mystery whereinto *the angels desire to look* (1 Peter i. 12), and can never look to the bottom of it: how shall the weak eyes of sinful flesh ever be able to reach unto it?

When Thou, in the estate of Thy human infirmity, offeredst to go down to the centurion's house, that humble commander could say, *Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof;* what shall we then say, that Thou, in the state of Thy heavenly glory, shouldest vouchsafe to come down and dwell with us in these houses of clay, and to make our breast *the temples of thy Holy Ghost?* (1 Cor. vi. 19).

When Thy Holy Mother came to visit the partner of her joy Thy forerunner, then in the womb of his mother, sprang for the joy of Thy presence, though distermined by

a second womb (Luke i. 44); how should we be affected with a ravishment of spirit, whom Thou hast pleased to visit in so much mercy as to come down into us, and to be spiritually conceived in the womb of our hearts, and thereby to give a new and spiritual life to our poor souls; a life of thine own, yet made ours; a life begun in grace and ending in eternal glory!

(3) Never did the Holy God give a privilege where He did not expect a duty. He hath more respect to His glory than to throw away his favours. The life that ariseth from this blessed union of our souls with Christ, as it is the height of all his mercies, so it *calls for our most zealous affections and most effectual improvements.*

Art thou, then, thus happily united to Christ, and thus enlivened by Christ? how entire must thou needs be with Him! how

dear must thy valuations be of Him! how heartily must thou be devoted to Him! *The spirit of man*, saith wise Solomon, *is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly* (Prov. xx. 27), and therefore cannot but be acquainted with his own inmates, and finding so heavenly a guest as the Spirit of Christ in the secret lodgings of his soul, applies itself to him in all things; so as these two spirits agree in all their spiritual concernments; *the Spirit itself*, saith the holy Apostle, *beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God* (Rom. viii. 16). And not in this case only, but upon whatsoever occasion the faithful man hath this *Urim* in his breast, and may consult with this inward Oracle of his God for direction and resolution in all his doubts; neither can he, according to the counsel of the Psalmist (Ps. iv. 4), commune with his own heart, but that

Christ, who lives there, is ready to give him an answer. Shortly, our souls and we are one, and the soul and life are so near one that the one is commonly taken for the other; Christ, therefore, who is the life and soul of our souls, is, and needs must be, so intrinsical to us that we cannot so much as conceive of our spiritual being without Him.

Thou needest not be told, my son, how much thou valuest life. Besides thine own sense Satan himself can tell thee, and in this case thou mayest believe him, *Skin for skin, and all that a man hath will he give for his life* (Job ii. 4). What ransom can be set upon it that a man would stick to give? though mountains of gold (Ps. xlix. 7), though thousands of rams, or ten thousand rivers of oil (Micah vi. 7). Yea, how readily do we expose our dear limbs, not to hazard only, but to loss, for the preservation of it!

Now, alas, what is our life? *It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away* (James iv. 14).

And if we do thus value a perishing life that is going out every moment, what price shall we set upon eternity? If Christ be our life, how precious is that life which neither inward distempers nor outward violences can bereave us of! which neither can be decayed by time nor altered with cross events! Hear the chosen vessel: *What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ* (Phil. iii. 7, 8); and as one that did not esteem his own life dear to him (Acts xx. 24) in respect of that better, *Always*, saith he, *bearing about in the body*

the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body (2 Cor. iv. 10). How cheerfully have the noble and conquering armies of holy martyrs given away these momentary lives that they might hold fast their Jesus, the life of their souls! And who can be otherwise affected that knows and feels the infinite happiness that offers itself to be enjoyed by him in the Lord Jesus?

Lastly, if Christ be thy life, then thou art so devoted to Him that thou livest as in Him and by Him, so to Him also; aiming only at His service and glory, and framing thyself wholly to His will and directions. Thou canst not so much as eat or drink but with respect to Him (1 Cor. x. 31). Oh, the gracious resolution of him that was rapt into the third heaven, worthy to be the pattern of all faithful hearts: *According to my earnest expec-*

tation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain (Phil. i. 20, 21). Our natural life is not worthy to be its own scope; we do not live merely that we may live; our spiritual life, Christ, is the utmost and most perfect end of all our living, without the intuition whereof we would not live; or if we should, our natural life were no other than a spiritual death.

O Saviour, let me not live longer than I shall be enlivened by Thee, or than Thou shalt be glorified by me.

And what rule should I follow in all the carriage of my life but Thine? Thy precepts, Thine examples; that so I may live Thee as well as preach Thee; and in both

may find Thee as Thou hast truly laid forth Thyself, *The Way, the Truth, and the Life* (John xiv. 6); *the Way*, wherein I shall walk; *the Truth*, which I shall believe and profess; and *the Life*, which I shall enjoy.

In all my moral actions, therefor, teach me to square myself by Thee; whatever I am about to do, or speak, or effect, let me think, "If my Saviour were now upon earth, would He do this that I am now putting my hand unto? would He speak these words that I am now uttering? would He be thus disposed as I now feel myself? Let me not yield myself to any thought, word, or action which my Saviour would be ashamed to own. Let Him be pleased so to manage His own life in me that all the interest He hath given me in myself may be wholly surrendered to Him; that

I may be, as it were, dead in myself while He lives and moves in me."

(4) By virtue of this blessed union, as Christ is become our life so (that which is the *highest improvement*, not only of the rational, but the supernatural and spiritual life) is He thereby also *made unto us of God, Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption* (1 Cor. i. 30); not that He only works these great things in and for us—this were too cold a construction of the Divine bounty,—but that He really becomes all these to us, who are true partakers of Him.

(1) Even of the wisest men that ever nature could boast of is verified that character which the divine Apostle gave of them long ago: *Their foolish heart was darkened; professing themselves to be wise, they became fools* (Rom. i. 21, 22); and still

the best of us, if we be but ourselves, may take up that complaint of Asaph, *So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee* (Ps. lxxiii. 22); and of Agur, the son of Jakeh, *Surely I am more brutish than man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy* (Prov. xxx. 2, 3). And if any man will be challenging more to himself he must at last take up with Solomon, *I said, I will be wise; but it was far from me* (Eccles. vii. 23).

But how defective soever we are in ourselves, there is wisdom enough in our Head, Christ, to supply all our wants. He that is the Wisdom of the Father is by the Father made our Wisdom: *In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*, saith the Apostle (Col. ii. 3); so hid that they are both revealed and com-

municated to His own: *For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ* (2 Cor. iv. 6). In and by Him hath it pleased the Father to impart Himself unto us: *He is the image of the invisible God* (Col. i. 15), even the *brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person* (Heb. i. 3). It was a just check that He gave to Philip in the Gospel: *Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father* (John xiv. 9).

And this point of wisdom is so high and excellent that all human skill and all the so much admired depths of philosophy are but mere ignorance and foolishness in comparison of it. Alas, what can these profound wits reach unto but the very outside

of these visible and transitory things? As for the inward forms of the meanest creatures, they are so altogether hid from them as if they had no being; and as for spiritual and divine things, the most knowing naturalists are either stone-blind that they cannot see them, or grope after them in an Egyptian darkness: *For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned* (1 Cor. ii. 14). How much less can they know the God of Spirits, who, besides His invisibility, is infinite and incomprehensible! Only He who is made our wisdom enlighteneth our eyes with this divine knowledge: *No man knoweth the Father, but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him* (Matt. xi. 27).

Neither is Christ made our wisdom only in respect of heavenly wisdom imparted to

us, but in respect of His perfect wisdom imputed unto us. Alas, our ignorances and sinful misprisions are many and great; where should we appear if our faith did not fetch succour from our all-wise and all-sufficient Mediator? O Saviour, we are wise in Thee, our Head, how weak soever we are of ourselves. Thine infinite wisdom and goodness both covers and makes up all our defects. The wife cannot be poor while the husband is rich; Thou hast vouchsafed to give us a right to Thy store; we have no reason to be disheartened with our own spiritual wants while Thou art made our wisdom.

(2) It is not mere wisdom that can make us acceptable to God. If the serpents were not in their kind wiser than we, we should not have been advised to be wise as serpents. That God, who is essential justice as well as

wisdom, requires all His to be not more wise than exquisitely righteous.

Such, in themselves, they cannot be: *For in many things we sin all.* Such, therefore, they are and must be in Christ, their Head, who is made unto us of God, together with wisdom, Righteousness.

O incomprehensible mercy! *He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him* (2 Cor. v. 21).

What a marvellous and happy exchange is here! We are nothing but sin: Christ is perfect righteousness. He is made our sin that we might be made His righteousness. He that knew no sin is made sin for us, that we, who are all sin, might be made God's righteousness in Him. In ourselves we are not only sinful, but sin; in Him we are not righteous only, but righteousness

itself. Of ourselves we are not righteous; we are made so. In ourselves we are not righteous, but in Him; we made not ourselves so, but the same God, in His infinite mercy, who made Him sin for us, hath made us His righteousness. No otherwise are we made His righteousness than He is made our sin; our sin is made His by God's imputation; so is His righteousness made ours.

How fully doth the second Adam answer and transcend the first! *By the offence of* the first, *judgment came upon all men to condemnation; by the righteousness of* the second *the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life* (Rom. v. 18). *As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous* (verse 19): righteous, not in themselves, *so death passed upon all, for that all have sinned* (verse 12), but in Him that made

them so, *by whom we have received atonement* (verse 11).

How free then and how perfect is our justification! What quarrel may the pure and holy God have against righteousness, against His own righteousness? and such are we made in and by Him.

What can now stand between us and blessedness?

Not our sins: for this is the praise of His mercy, that He *justifies the ungodly* (Rom. iv. 5). Yea, were we not sinful how were we capable of His justification? sinful, as in the term, from whence this act of His mercy moveth; not as in the term, wherein it resteth. His grace finds us sinful; it doth not leave us so. Far be it from the Righteous Judge of the World to absolve a wicked soul continuing such: *He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both*

are an abomination to the Lord (Prov. xvii. 15). No; but He kills sin in us while He remits it, and at once cleanseth and accepts our persons. Repentance and remission do not lag one after another; both of them meet at once in the penitent soul; at once doth the hand of our faith lay hold on Christ, and the hand of Christ lay hold on the soul to justification, so as the sins that are done away can be no bar to our happiness.

And what but sins can pretend to a hindrance? All our other weaknesses are no eyesore to God; no rub in our way to heaven.

What matters it, then, how unworthy we are of ourselves? It is Christ's obedience that is our righteousness; and that obedience cannot but be exquisitely perfect, cannot but be both justly accepted as His and mercifully accepted as for us.

There is a great deal of difference betwixt

being righteous and being made righteousness. Every regenerate soul hath an inherent justice or righteousness in itself: *He that is righteous, let him be righteous still*, saith the angel (Rev. xxii. 11). But at the best this righteousness of ours is, like ourselves, full of imperfection: *If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?* (Ps. cxxx. 3.) *Behold, we are before thee in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before thee because of this* (Ezra ix. 15). *How should a man be just with God? If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand* (Job ix. 2, 3). So, then, *he that doth righteousness is righteous* (1 John iii. 7), but by pardon and indulgence, because the righteousness he doth is weak and imperfect. He that is made righteousness is perfectly righteous by a gracious acceptation, by a free imputation of absolute obedience.

Woe were us if we were put over to our own accomplishments! for *Cursed is every one that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them* (Gal. iii. 10; Deut. xxvii. 26); and *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us* (1 John i. 8). Lo, if there be truth in us, we must confess we have sin in us; and if we have sin we violate the law; and if we violate the law we lie open to a curse.

But here is our comfort, that our Surety hath paid our debt. It is true we lay forfeited to death. Justice had said, *The soul that sinneth, it shall die* (Ezek. xviii. 4). Mercy interposeth and satisfies. The Son of God, whose every drop of blood was worth a world, pays this death for us; and now *Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; Who is he that con-*

demneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us (Rom. viii. 33, 34). Our sin, our death, is laid upon Him and undertaken by Him: *He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisements of our peace were upon him; and with his stripes we are healed* (Isa. liii. 5). His death, His obedience, is made over to us. So, then, the sin that we have deserved is not ours, but the death which He hath endured, and the obedience that He hath performed, is so ours as He is ours, who is, thereupon, made of God our Righteousness.

Where now are those enemies of grace that scoff at imputation, making it a ridiculous paradox that a man should become just by another man's righteousness? How dare they stand out against the word of

truth, which tells us expressly that Christ is made our righteousness? What strangers are they to that grace they oppugn? How little do they consider that Christ is ours! His righteousness, therefore, by which we are justified, is in Him our own. He that hath *borne the iniquity of us all* (Isa. liii. 6) hath taught us to call our sins our *debts* (Matt. vi. 12); those debts can be but once paid; if the bounty of our Redeemer hath staked down the sums required and cancelled the bonds, and this payment is, through mercy, fully accepted as from our own hands, what danger, what scruple can remain?

Why do we then, weak souls, tremble to think of appearing before the dreadful tribunal of the Almighty? We know Him, indeed, to be infinitely and inflexibly just; we know His most pure eyes cannot abide to behold sin; we know we have

nothing else but sin for Him to behold in us. Certainly, were we to appear before Him in the mere shape of our own sinful selves we had reason to shake and shiver at the apprehension of that terrible appearance ; but now that our faith assures us we shall no otherwise be presented to that awful Judge than as clothed with the robes of Christ's righteousness, how confident should we be, thus decked with the garments of our elder brother, to carry away a blessing ! While, therefore, we are dejected with the conscience of our own vileness we have reason to lift up our heads in the confidence of that perfect righteousness which Christ is made unto us, and we are made in Him.

(3) At the bar of men many a one is pronounced just who remains inwardly foul and guilty ; for the best of men can but judge of things as they appear, not as they are.

But the Righteous Arbiter of the World declares none just whom He makes not holy.

The same mercy, therefore, that makes Christ our righteousness makes Him also our Sanctification. Of ourselves, wretched men, what are we other, at our best, than unholy creatures, full of pollution and spiritual uncleanness? It is His most Holy Spirit that must *cleanse us from all the filthiness of our flesh and spirit* (2 Cor. vii. 1), and work us daily to further degrees of sanctification: *He that is holy, let him be holy still* (Rev. xxii. 11). Neither can there be anything more abhorring from His infinite justice and holiness than to justify those souls which lie still in the loathsome ordure of their corruptions.

Certainly, they never truly learnt Christ who would draw over Christ's righteousness as a case of their close wickednesses, that

sever holiness from justice, and give no place to sanctification in the evidence of their justifying. Never man was justified without faith; and wheresoever faith is there it *purifieth* and cleanseth (Acts xv. 9).

But besides that the Spirit of Christ works thus powerfully, though gradually, within us, *that he may sanctify and cleanse us with the washing of water by the word*, His holiness is mercifully imputed to us, *that he may present us to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that we should be holy and without blemish* (Eph. v. 26, 27); so as that inchoate holiness which by His gracious inoperation grows up daily in us towards a full perfection is abundantly supplied by His absolute holiness, made no less by imputation ours than it is personally His.

When, therefore, we look into our bosoms

we find just cause to be ashamed of our impurity, and to loath those dregs of corruption that yet remain in our sinful nature; but when we cast up our eyes to heaven and behold the infinite holiness of that Christ to whom we are united, which by faith is made ours, we have reason to bear up against all the discouragements that may arise from the conscience of our own vileness, and to look God in the face with an awful boldness, as those whom He is pleased to present *holy* and *unblameable and unreproveable in his sight* (Col. i. 22), as knowing that *he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one* (Heb. ii. 11).

(4) Redemption was the great errand for which the Son of God came down into the world, and the work which He did while He was in the world, and that which, in way of application of it, He shall be ever accom-

plishing, till He shall deliver up His mediatory kingdom into the hands of His Father. In this He begins, in this He finishes the great business of our salvation; for those who in this life are enlightened by His wisdom, justified by His merits, sanctified by His grace are yet conflicting with manifold temptations and struggling with varieties of miseries and dangers, till, upon their happy death and glorious resurrection, they shall be fully freed by their ever-blessed and victorious Redeemer.

He, therefore, who by virtue of that heavenly union is made unto us of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, is also upon the same ground made unto us our full Redemption.

Redemption implies a captivity. We are naturally under the woeful bondage of the law, of sin, of miseries, of death.

The law is a cruel exactor, for it requires of us what we cannot now do, and whips us for not doing it: *For the law worketh wrath* (Rom. iv. 15), and *as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse* (Gal. iii. 10). Sin is a worse tyrant than he, and takes advantage to exercise his cruelty by the law: *For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death* (Rom. vii. 5). Upon sin necessarily follows misery, the forerunner of death, and death, the upshot of all miseries: *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned* (Rom. v. 12).

From all these is Christ our Redemption. From the law, for *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse*

for us (Gal. iii. 13). From sin, for *we are dead to sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord* (Rom. vi. 11). *Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law but under grace* (verse 14). From death, and therein from all miseries: *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ* (1 Cor. xv. 55-57).

Now, then, let the law do his worst: *We are not under the law, but under grace* (Rom. vi. 14). The case, therefore, is altered betwixt the law and us. It is not now a cruel task-master to beat us to and for our work; it is our schoolmaster, to direct and to whip us unto Christ. It is not a severe judge to condemn us; it is a friendly guide to set us the way towards heaven.

Let sin join his forces together with the law, they cannot prevail to our hurt: *For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit* (Rom. viii. 3, 4).

Let death join his forces with them both, we are yet safe: *For the law of the Spirit of life hath freed us from the law of sin and of death* (Rom. viii. 2).

What can we therefore fear, what can we suffer, while Christ is made our Redemption?

Finally, as thus Christ is made unto us Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption, so whatsoever else He either is, or hath, or doth, by virtue of this blessed union becomes ours. He is our *Riches*

(Eph. i. 7), our *Strength* (Ps. xxvii. 1 ; xxviii. 7), our *Glory* (Eph. i. 18), our *Salvation* (1 Thess. v. 9 ; Isa. xii. 2), our *All* (Col. iii. 11). He is all to us, and all is ours in Him.

SECTION II

The external privileges of this union a right to the blessings of earth and heaven

FROM these primary and intrinsical privileges therefore, flow all those secondary and external wherewith we are blessed, and therein A RIGHT TO ALL THE BLESSINGS OF GOD, BOTH OF THE RIGHT HAND AND OF THE LEFT, AND INTEREST IN ALL THE GOOD THINGS, BOTH OF EARTH AND HEAVEN.

Hereupon it is that the glorious angels of heaven become our guardians, keeping us in all our ways, and working secretly for our good upon all occasions, that all God's

creatures are at our service, that we have a true spiritual title to them. *All things are yours*, saith the Apostle, *and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's* (1 Cor. iii. 22, 23).

But take heed, my son, of mislaying thy claim to what and in what manner thou oughtest not. There is a civil right that must regulate our propriety to these earthly things; our spiritual right neither gives us possession of them nor takes away the right and propriety of others. Every man hath and must have what by the just laws of purchase, gift, or inheritance is derived to him; otherwise there would follow an infinite confusion in the world: we could neither enjoy nor give our own; and only will and might must be the arbiters of all men's estates, which how unequal it would be both reason and experience can sufficiently evince.

This right is not for the direption or usurpation of that which civil titles have legally put over to others—there were no theft, no robbery, no oppression in the world if any man's goods might be every man's—but for the warrantable and comfortable enjoying of those earthly commodities in regard of God, their original owner, which are by human conveyances justly become ours. *The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness of it;* in His right whatever parcels do lawfully descend unto us we may justly possess, as we have them legally made over to us from the secondary and immediate owners.

There is a generation of men who have vainly fancied the founding of temporal dominion in grace, and have upon this mistaking outed the true heirs as intruders and scoffed the just and godly in the posses-

sion of wicked inheritors, which, whether they be worse Commonwealthsmen or Christians, is to me utterly uncertain. Sure I am they are enemies to both, while on the one side they destroy all civil propriety and commerce, and on the other reach the extent of the power of Christianity so far as to render it injurious and destructive, both to reason and to the laws of all well-ordered humanity.

Nothing is ours by injury and injustice; all things are so ours that we may, with a good conscience, enjoy them as from the hand of a munificent God, when they are rightfully estated upon us by the lawful convention or bequest of men.

In this regard it is that a Christian man is the lord of the whole universe, and hath a right to the whole creation of God. How can he challenge less? he is a son, and in that an

heir, and, according to the high expression of the Holy Ghost, *a co-heir with Christ.*

As, therefore, we may not be high-minded but fear, so we may not be too low-hearted in the undervaluing of our condition; in God we are great, how mean soever in ourselves. In His right the world is ours, whatever pittance we enjoy in our own. How can we go less when we are one with Him who is the possessor of heaven and earth?

It were but a poor comfort to us if by virtue of this union we could only lay claim to all earthly things; alas, how vain and transitory are the best of these, perishing under our hand in the very use of them! and, in the meanwhile, how unsatisfying in the fruition! All this were nothing if we had not hereby an interest in the best of

all God's favours, in the heaven of heavens and the eternity of that glory which is there laid up for His saints, far above the reach of all human expressions or conceits. It was the word of Him who is the Eternal Word of His Father: *Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me* (John xvii. 24); and not only to be mere spectators, but even partners of all this celestial bliss, together with Himself: *The glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one* (John xvii. 22). Oh, the transcendent and incomprehensible blessedness of believers, which, even when they enjoy, they cannot be able to utter, for measure infinite, for duration eternal! Oh, the inexplicable joy of the full and everlasting accomplishment of the happy

union of Christ and the believing soul, more fit for thankful wonder and ravishment of spirit than for any finite apprehension!

THE MEANS BY WHICH THIS UNION IS WROUGHT

CHAPTER VI

NOW that we may look a little further into the means by which this union is wrought, know, my son, that as there are two persons betwixt whom this union is made, Christ and the believer, so each of them concurs to the happy effecting of it: Christ, by His Spirit diffused through the hearts of all the regenerate, giving life and activity to them; the believer, laying hold by faith upon Christ, so working in him; and these do so react upon each other that, from their mutual operation, results this gracious union whereof we treat.

Here is a spiritual marriage betwixt Christ and the soul. The liking of one part

doth not make up the match, but the consent of both. To this purpose Christ gives His Spirit; the soul plights her faith; what interest have we in Christ but by His Spirit? what interest hath Christ in us but by our faith?

On the one part, He hath *given us his holy Spirit*, saith the Apostle (1 Thess. iv. 8), and in a way of correlation, *We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God* (1 Cor. ii. 12). And this Spirit we have so received as that *He dwells in us* (Rom. viii. 11), and so dwells in us as that we are *joined to the Lord, and he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit* (1 Cor. vi. 17).

On the other part, *We have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.* So as now, *The life that we live in the flesh we*

live by the faith of the Son of God (Gal. ii. 20), who *dwells in our hearts by faith* (Eph. iii. 17). Oh, the grace of faith! according to St. Peter's style (2 Peter i. 1), truly *precious*, justly recommended to us by St. Paul (Eph. vi. 16), above all other graces incident into the soul, as that which if not alone, yet chiefly transacts all the main affairs tending to salvation. For faith is the quickening grace (Gal. ii. 20; Rom. i. 17), the directing grace (2 Cor. v. 7), the protecting grace (Eph. vi. 16), the establishing grace (Rom. xi. 20; 2 Cor. i. 24), the justifying grace (Rom. v. 1), the sanctifying and purifying grace (Acts xv. 9). Faith is the grace that assents to, apprehends, applies, appropriates Christ (Heb. xi. 1), and, hereupon, the uniting grace, and which comprehends all, the saving grace.

If ever, therefore, we look for any consolation in Christ, or to have any part in this beatifical union, it must be the main care of our hearts to make sure of a lively faith in the Lord Jesus, to lay fast hold upon Him, to clasp Him close to us, yea, to receive Him inwardly into our bosoms and so to make Him ours and ourselves His that we may be joined to Him as our Head, espoused to Him as our Husband, incorporated into Him as our Nourishment, engrafted in Him as our Stock, and laid upon Him as a sure Foundation.

THE UNION OF CHRIST'S MEMBERS WITH THEMSELVES

CHAPTER VII

HITHERTO we have treated of this blessed union as in relation to Christ, the Head. It remains that we now consider of it as it stands in relation to the members of His mystical body, one towards another.

For as the body is united to the head, so must the members be united to themselves to make the body truly complete. Thus the Holy Ghost, by His Apostle: *As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so is Christ* (1 Cor. xii. 12).

From this entire conjunction of the members with each other arises that happy

communion of saints which we profess both to believe and to partake of.

This mystical body of Christ is a large one, extending itself both to heaven and earth. There is a real union betwixt all those far-spread limbs, between the saints in heaven, between the saints on earth, between the saints in heaven and earth.

SECTION I

The union of Christ's members in heaven

WE have reason to begin at HEAVEN. Thence is the original of our union and blessedness.

There was never place for discord in that region of glory since the rebellious angels were cast out thence. *The spirits of just men made perfect* (Heb. xii. 23) must needs agree in a perfect unity.

Neither can it be otherwise, for there is but one will in heaven, one scope of the desires of blessed souls, which is the glory of their God; all the whole choir sing one song, and in that one harmonious tune of

Hallelujah. We poor parcel-sainted souls here on earth profess to bend our eyes directly upon the same holy end, the honour of our Maker and Redeemer; but, alas, at our best we are drawn to look asquint at our own aims of profit or pleasure; we profess to sing loud praises unto God, but it is with many harsh and jarring notes. Above there is a perfect accordance in a unanimous glorifying of Him that sits upon the throne for ever. *Oh, how ye love the Lord, all ye his saints* (Ps. xxxi. 23). *Oh, how joyful ye are in glory* (Ps. cxlix. 5). *The heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Lord: thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints* (Ps. lxxxix. 5).

Oh, what a blessed commonwealth is that above! *The city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem* (ever *at unity with itself*, Ps. cxxii. 3), and therein *an innumer-*

able company of angels, and the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, the spirits of just men made perfect, and, whom they all adore, *God, the Judge of all, and Jesus, the mediator of the New Testament* (Heb. xii. 22-24). All these as one, as holy. Those *twenty thousand chariots of* heaven (Ps. lxviii. 17) move all one way. When those four beasts *full of eyes, round about the throne, give glory and honour and thanks to him that sits upon the throne, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come: then the four and twenty elders fall down before him, and cast their crowns before the throne* (Rev. iv. 6-10). No one wears his crown while the rest cast down theirs; all accord in one act of giving glory to the Highest. After the sealing of the tribes *A great multitude, which no man could number,*

of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might be unto God for ever and ever (Rev. vii. 9-12).

Lo, those spirits which here below were habited with several bodies, different in shapes, statures, ages, complexions, are now above as one spirit, rather distinguished than divided; all united in one perpetual adoration and fruition of the God of Spirits; and mutually happy in God, in themselves, in each other.

SECTION II

The union of Christ's members upon earth: (1) *In matter of judgment;* (2) *In matter of affection;* (3) *A complaint of divisions; and, notwithstanding them, an assertion of unity;* (4) *The necessary effects and fruits of this union of Christian hearts*

Our copy is set us above; we labour to take it out here on earth. What do we but daily pray that the blessed union of souls which is eminent in that empyreal heaven may be exemplified by us in this region of mortality? For *having through Christ an access by one Spirit unto God the Father, being no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the*

household of God (Eph. ii. 18, 19), we cease not to pray, *Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven* (Matt. vi. 10). Yea, O Saviour, Thou who canst not but be heard hast prayed to Thy Father for the accomplishment of this union, *That they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfect in one* (John xvii. 22, 23).

What, then, is this union of the members of Christ here on earth but a spiritual oneness, arising from a happy conspiration of their thoughts and affections? For whereas there are two main principles of all human actions and dispositions, the brain and the heart, the conjuncture of these two cannot but produce a perfect union; from the one our thoughts take their rise, our affections from the other; in both the soul puts itself forth upon all matter of accord or difference.

(1) The union of *Thoughts* is when we mind the same things, when we agree in the same truths. This is the charge which the Apostle of the Gentiles lays upon his Corinthians, and, in their persons, upon all Christians: *Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment* (1 Cor. i. 10).

And this is no other than that *one faith* (Eph. iv. 5) which makes up the one Church of Christ upon earth. One both in respect of Times and Places.

Of Times: so as the Fathers of the first world, the Patriarchs of the next, and all God's people in their ages that looked together with them for the redemption of Israel (Luke ii. 38) are united with us

Christians of the last days in the same belief, and make up one entire body of Christ's Catholic Church.

Of Places: so as all those that truly profess the name of Christ, though scattered into the farthest remote regions of the earth, even those that walk with their feet opposite to ours, yet meet with us in the same centre of Christian faith, and make up one household of God.

Not that we can hope it possible that all Christians should agree in all truths. While we are here our minds cannot but be more unlike to each other than our faces, yea, it is a rare thing for a man to hold constant to his own apprehensions.

Lord God! what a world do we meet with of those who miscall themselves several religions, indeed, several professions of one and the same Christianity! Melchites, Georgians,

Maronites, Jacobites, Armenians, Abyssines, Cophti, Nestorians, Russians, Mengrellians, and the rest that fill up the large map of Christianography: all which as while they hold the head Christ, they cannot be denied the privilege of His members; so, being such, they are, or should be, indissolubly joined together in the unity of spirit and maintenance of *the faith which was once delivered unto the saints* (Jude 3). It is not the variety of by-opinions that can exclude them from having their part in that one Catholic Church, and their just claim to the Communion of Saints. While they hold the solid and precious foundation, it is not the *hay* or *stubble* (1 Cor. iii. 12) which they lay upon it that can set them off from God or His Church. But, in the meantime, it must be granted that they have much to answer for to the God of Peace

and Unity who are so much addicted to their own conceits, and so indulgent to their own interest as to raise and maintain new doctrines, and to set up new sects in the Church of Christ varying from the common and received truths, labouring to draw disciples after them, to the great distraction of souls and scandal of Christianity. With which sort of disturbers I must needs say this age into which we are fallen hath been, and is, above all that have gone before us, most miserably pestered; what good soul can be other than confounded to hear of and see more than a hundred and fourscore new, and some of them dangerous and blasphemous, opinions broached and defended in one once famous and unanimous Church of Christ? Who can say other, upon the view of these wild thoughts, than Gerson said long since, that the world, now grown

old, is full of doting fancies? if not rather that the world, now near his end, raves and talks nothing but fancies and frenzies? How arbitrary soever these self-willed fanatics may think it to take to themselves this liberty of thinking what they list and venting what they think, the blessed Apostle hath long since branded them with a heavy sentence: *Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple* (Rom. xvi. 17, 18).

But notwithstanding all this hideous variety of vain and heterodoxal conceptions, He who is the Truth of God and the Bridegroom of His Spouse, the Church, hath

said, *My dove, my undefiled is one* (Cant. vi. 9): one in the main, essential, fundamental verities necessary to salvation, though differing in divers misraised corollaries, inconsequent inferences, unnecessary additions, feigned traditions, unwarrantable practices. The body is one, though the garments differ, yea, rather, for most of these the garment is one, but differs in the dressing, handsomely and comely set out by one, disguised by another. Neither is it, nor ever shall be, in the power of all the fiends of hell, the professed make-baits of the world, to make God's Church other than one: which were indeed utterly to extinguish and reduce it to nothing, for the unity and entity of the Church can no more be divided than itself. It were no less than blasphemy to fasten upon the chaste and most holy Husband of the Church any other than one Spouse. In

the institution of marriage *did he not make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed* (Mal. ii. 15). That which He ordained for us shall not the holy God much more observe in His own heavenly match with His Church? Here is then *one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism*: one Baptism, by which we enter into the Church; one Faith, which we profess in the Church; and one Lord, whom we serve, and who is the Head and Husband of the Church.

(2) How much, therefore, doth it concern us that we who are united in one common belief should be much more united in *affection!* that where there is *one way* there should be much more *one heart!* (Jer. xxxii. 39). This is so justly supposed that the Prophet questions, *Can two walk together, except they be agreed?* (Amos iii. 3). If we

walk together in our judgments we cannot but accord in our wills.

This was the praise of the primitive Christians and the pattern of their successors: *The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul* (Acts iv. 32).

Yea, this is the livery which our Lord and Saviour made choice of, whereby His menial servants should be known and distinguished: *By this shall all men know that ye be my disciples, if ye have love to another* (John xiii. 35). In vain shall any man pretend to a discipleship if he do not make it good by his love to all the family of Christ.

The whole Church is the spiritual temple of God. Every believer is a living stone laid in those sacred walls; what is our Christian love but the mortar or cement whereby these stones are fast joined together to make up this heavenly building?

without which that precious fabric could not hold long together, but would be subject to disjointing by those violent tempests of opposition wherewith it is commonly beaten upon. There is no place for any loose stone in God's edifice; the whole Church is one entire body; all the limbs must be held together by the ligaments of Christian love; if any one will be severed and affect to subsist of itself it hath lost his place in the body. Thus the Apostle: that we, *being sincere in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love* (Eph. iv. 15, 16).

But in case there happen to be differ-

ences in opinion concerning points not essential, not necessary to salvation, this diversity may not breed an alienation of affection. That charity which can cover a multitude of sins may much more cover many small dissensions of judgment. We cannot hope to be all, and at all times, equally enlightened. At how many and great weaknesses of judgment did it please our merciful Saviour to connive in His domestic disciples! they that had so long sat at the sacred feet of Him that spake as never man spake were yet to seek of those Scriptures which had so clearly foretold His resurrection (John xx. 9), and after that were at a fault for the manner of His kingdom (Acts i. 6); yet He that breaks not the bruised reed, nor quenches the smoking flax, falls not harshly upon them for so foul an error and ignorance, but entertains them

with all loving respect, not as followers only, but as friends (John xv. 15). And His great Apostle, after he had spent himself in his unweariable endeavours upon God's Church, and had sown the seeds of wholesome and saving doctrine everywhere, what rank and noisome weeds of erroneous opinions rose up under his hand in the churches of Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Colossae, Philippi, and Thessalonica! these he labours to root out, with much zeal, with no bitterness, so opposing the errors as not alienating his affection from the churches. These, these must be our precedents, pursuing that charge of the prime Apostle, *Finally be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous* (1 Peter iii. 8); and that passionate and adjuring obstetation of the Apostle of the Gentiles, *If there be any consolation in*

Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind (Phil. ii. 1, 2).

This is it that gives beauty, strength, glory to the Church of God upon earth, and brings it nearest to the resemblance of that triumphant part above, where there is all perfection of love and concord. In imitation whereof the Psalmist, sweetly: *Behold, how good and joyful a thing it is, brethren, to dwell together in unity!* (Ps. cxxxiii. 1).

(3) So much the more justly lamentable it is to see the manifold and grievous *distractions* of the Church of Christ, both in judgment and affection.

Woe is me, into how many thousand pieces is the seamless coat of our Saviour rent! Yea, into what numberless atoms is

the precious body of Christ torn and minced! There are more religions than nations upon earth, and in each religion as many different conceits as men. If St. Paul, when his Corinthians did but say, *I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Cephas*, could ask *Is Christ divided?* (1 Cor. i. 12, 13) when there was only an emulatory magnifying of their own teachers, though agreeing and orthodox, what, think we, would he now say if he saw a hundred of sectmasters and heresiarchs, some of them opposite to other, all to the truth, applauded by their credulous and divided followers? all of them claiming Christ for theirs and denying Him to their gainsayers. Would he not ask, "Is Christ multiplied? Is Christ subdivided? Is Christ shred into infinites?" O God! what is become of Christianity? How do evil spirits and men labour to destroy that creed which

we have always constantly professed! For if we set up more Christs, where is that one? and if we give way to these infinite distractions, where is the Communion of Saints?

But be not too much dismayed, my son. Notwithstanding all these cold dishearteningings, take courage to thyself. He that is truth itself hath said, *The gates of hell shall not prevail against* His Church (Matt. xvi. 18). In spite of all devils there shall be saints, and those are and shall be as the scales of the leviathan, whose *strong pieces of shields are his pride, shut up together as with a close seal. One is so near to another, that no air can come betwixt them. They are joined one to another, they stick together, that they cannot be sundered* (Job xli. 15-17). In all the main principles of religion there is *a universal and unanimous consent of all Christians*, and

these are they that constitute a church. Those that agree in these Christ is pleased to admit, for matter of doctrine, as members of that body whereof he is the Head ; and if they admit not of each other as such, the fault is in the uncharitableness of the refusers, no less than in the error of the refused. And if any vain and loose stragglers will needs sever themselves, and wilfully choose to go ways of their own, let them know that the union of Christ's Church shall consist entire without them ; this great ocean will be one collection of waters when these drops are lost in the dust. In the meantime it highly concerns all that wish well to the sacred name of Christ to labour *to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* (Eph. iv. 3), and to renew and continue the prayer of the Apostle for all the professors of Christianity : *Now the God of patience and con-*

solation grant you to be likeminded one towards another according to Christ Jesus: that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. xv. 5, 6).

(4) Far be it from us to think this union of the hearts of God's saints upon earth can be idle and ineffectual, but wherever it is *it puts forth itself in a like-affectedness of disposition, into an improvement of gifts, into a communication of outward blessings, to the benefit of that happy consociation.*

We cannot be single in our affections if we be limbs of a Christian community. What member of the body can complain so as the rest shall not feel it? even the head and heart are in pain when a joint of the least toe suffers. No Christian can be afflicted alone. It is not St. Paul's case only: *Who is weak, and I am not weak?*

who is offended, and I burn not? (2 Cor. xi. 29). Our shoulders are not our own; we must *bear one another's burdens* (Gal. vi. 2). There is a better kind of spiritual good-fellowship in all the saints of God; they hate a propriety of passions: *Rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep* (Rom. xii. 15).

Their affections are not more communicative than their gifts and graces. Those, as they are bestowed with an intuition of the common good, so they are improvided. Wherefore hath this man quickness of wit, that man depth of judgment; this heat of zeal, that power of elocution; this skill, that experience; this authority, that strength, but that all should be laid together for the raising of the common stock? How rich, therefore, is every Christian soul that is not only furnished with its own graces, but hath

a special interest in all the excellent gifts of all the most eminent servants of God through the whole world! Surely he cannot be poor while there is any spiritual wealth in the Church of God upon earth!

Neither are or can these gifts be in the danger of concealment; they are still put forth for the public advantage. As, therefore, no true Christian is his own man, so he freely lays out himself by Example, by Admonition, by Exhortation, by Consolation, by Prayer, for the universal benefit of all his fellow-members.

By Example: which is not a little winning and prevalent: *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*, saith our Saviour in His sermon upon the Mount (Matt. v. 16); and His great Apostle seconds His charge to his Philippians: *That ye may*

be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life (Phil. ii. 15, 16). Lo, the world sits in darkness, and either stirs not, or moves with danger; good example is a light to their feet, which directs them to walk in the ways of God, without erring, without stumbling, so as the good man's actions are so many copies for novices to take out, no less instructive than the wisest men's precepts.

By Admonition: The sinner is in danger of drowning; seasonable admonition is a hand stretched out that lays hold on him now sinking, and draws him up to the shore. The sinner is already in the fire; seasonable admonition snatches him out from the everlasting burnings (Jude 23). The charitable Christian may not forbear this (oft-times

thankless, but) always necessary and profitable duty. *Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him* (Lev. xix. 17).

By Exhortation: The fire of God's Spirit within us is subject to many damps and dangers of quenching; seasonable exhortation blows it up, and quickens those sparks of good motions to a perfect flame. Even the best of us lies open to a certain deadness and obduredness of heart; seasonable exhortation shakes off this peril, and keeps the heart in a holy tenderness and whether awful or cheerful disposition: *Exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin* (Heb. iii. 13).

By Consolation: We are all naturally subject to droop under the pressure of

afflictions; seasonable comforts lift and stay us up. It is a sad complaint that the Church makes in the Lamentations: *They have heard that I sigh: there is none to comfort me* (Lam. i. 21); and David sets the same mournful ditty upon his Shoshannim: *Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, and there was none; and for comforters, but I found none* (Ps. lxix. 20). Wherefore hath God given to men *the tongue of the learned* but that they *might know to speak a word in season to him that is weary?* (Isa. l. 4). That they may *strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees*, and *say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not?* (Isa. xxxv. 3, 4). The charge that our Saviour gives to Peter holds universally: *Thou, when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren* (Luke xxii. 32).

By Prayer: So as each member of Christ's Church sues for all; neither can any one be shut out from partaking the benefit of the devotions of all God's saints upon earth. There is a certain spiritual traffic of piety betwixt all God's children, wherein they exchange prayers with each other, not regarding number so much as weight. Am I weak in spirit and faint in my supplications? I have no less share in the most fervent prayers of the holiest suppliants than in my own; all the vigour that is in the most ardent hearts supplies my defects; while there is life in their faithful devotions I cannot go away unblessed.

Lastly, where there is a communion of inward graces and spiritual services there must needs be much more a communication of outward and temporal good things as just occasion requireth. Away with those dotages

of Platonical or Anabaptistical communities! Let proprieties be as they ought, constantly fixed, where the laws and civil right have placed them; but let the use of these outward blessings be managed and commanded by the necessities of our brethren: *Withhold not thy goods from the owners thereof, when it is in the power of thy hand to do it. Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again to-morrow, and I will give it; when thou hast it by thee* (Prov. iii. 27, 28). These temporal things were given us not to engross and hoard up superfluously, but to distribute and dispense: *As we therefore have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith* (Gal. vi. 10).

Such, then, is the union of God's children here on earth, both in matter of judgment and affection, and the beneficial improvement

of that affection, whether in spiritual gifts or good offices, or communicating of our earthly substance. Where the heart is one none of these can be wanting, and where they all are there is a happy communion of saints.

SECTION III

The union of the saints on earth with those in heaven

AS there is a perfect union betwixt the glorious saints in heaven and a union, though imperfect, betwixt the saints on earth, so there is a union, partly perfect and partly imperfect, between THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN and THE SAINTS BELOW UPON EARTH: perfect in respect of those glorified saints above, imperfect in respect of the weak returns we are able to make to them again.

Let no man think that because those blessed souls are out of sight, far distant in another world, and we are here toiling in a

vale of tears, we have therefore lost all mutual regard to each other; no, there is still, and ever will be, a secret but unfailing correspondence between heaven and earth. The present happiness of those heavenly citizens cannot have abated aught of their knowledge and charity, but must needs have raised them to a higher pitch of both. They, therefore, who are now glorious comprehensors cannot but, in a generality, retain the notice of the sad condition of us poor travellers here below, panting towards our rest together with them, and in common wish for the happy consummation of this our weary pilgrimage in the fruition of their glory. That they have any perspective whereby they can see down into our particular wants is that which we find no ground to believe; it is enough that they have a universal apprehension of the estate of Christ's warfaring

Church upon the face of the earth (Rev. vi. 10), and fellow-members of the same mystical body long for a perfect glorification of the whole.

As for us wretched pilgrims that are yet left here below to tug with many difficulties, we cannot forget that better half of us that is now triumphant in glory. O ye blessed saints above, we honour your memories so far as we ought; we do with praise recount your virtues; we magnify your victories; we bless God for your happy exemption from the misery of this world, and for your estating in that blessed immortality; we imitate your holy examples; we long and pray for a happy consociation with you. We dare not raise temples, dedicate altars, direct prayers to you; we dare not, finally, offer anything to you which you are unwilling to receive, nor put anything upon you which you

would disclaim as prejudicial to your Creator and Redeemer. It is abundant comfort to us that some part of us is in the fruition of that glory whereto we, the other poor labouring part, desire and strive to aspire ; that our head and shoulders are above water while the other limbs are yet wading through the stream.

A RECAPITULATION AND SUM OF THE WHOLE TREATISE

CHAPTER VIII

To wind up all: My son, if ever thou look for sound comfort on earth and salvation in heaven unglue thyself from the world and vanities of it; put thyself upon thy Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ; leave not till thou findest thyself firmly united to Him, so as thou art become a limb of that body whereof He is head, a spouse of that husband, a branch of that stem, a stone laid upon that foundation. Look not, therefore, for any blessing out of Him, and in, and by, and from Him look for all blessings. Let Him be thy life, and wish not to live longer than thou art quickened by Him. Find Him thy

Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, Redemption; thy Riches, thy Strength, thy Glory.

Apply unto thyself all that thy Saviour is or hath done.[1] Wouldst thou have the graces of God's Spirit? fetch them from His anointing. Wouldst thou have power against spiritual enemies? fetch it from His sovereignty. Wouldst thou have redemption? fetch it from His passion. Wouldst thou have absolution? fetch it from His perfect innocence. Freedom from the curse? fetch it from His cross. Satisfaction? fetch it from His sacrifice. Cleansing from sin? fetch it from His blood. Mortification? fetch it from His grave. Newness of life? fetch it from His resurrection. Right to heaven? fetch it from His purchase. Audience in all thy suits? fetch it from His intercession.

[1] Hier Zanch. Loc. Com. 8 de Symbolo Apost.

Wouldst thou have salvation? fetch it from His session at the right hand of Majesty. Wouldst thou have all? fetch it from Him who is *One Lord, one God and Father of all, who is above all, through all, and in all* (Eph. iv. 5, 6).

And as thy faith shall thus interest thee in Christ thy Head, so let thy charity unite thee to His body, the Church, both in earth and heaven. Hold ever an inviolable communion with that holy and blessed fraternity. Sever not thyself from it either in judgment or affection. Make account there is not one of God's saints upon earth but hath a propriety in thee; and thou mayest challenge the same in each of them, so as thou canst not but be sensible of their passions; and be freely communicative of all thy graces and all serviceable offices, by example, admonition, exhortation, consolation, prayer,

beneficence, for the good of that sacred community.

And when thou raisest up thine eyes to heaven think of that glorious society of blessed saints who are gone before thee, and are now there triumphing and reigning in eternal and incomprehensible glory. Bless God for them, and wish thyself with them. Tread in their holy steps, and be ambitious of that crown of glory and immortality which thou seest shining on their heads.

THE END

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